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*Past Deliverances and present  
Calamities improved.*

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IN A  
S E R M O N

Preached at

*H A N D - A L L E Y,*

In L O N D O N,

*November the 5<sup>th</sup>. M. DCC. XX.*

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By J O H N E V A N S. *K*

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JUDG. X. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

*And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorite, from the Children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?*

*The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and Maonites did oppress you, and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.*

*Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other Gods; wherefore, I will deliver you no more.*

*Go and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.*

*And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned, do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.*

*And they put away the strange Gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.*



**W**E find in the beginning of this chapter, that the children of Israel, after they had enjoyed peace during the administration of two of their Judges, cast themselves afresh under the anger of God by their renewed and great



provocations, particularly in idolatry, for which he suffered them to be brought into new distresses and dangers; the *Philistines* on the one hand, and the *Ammonites* on the other, sorely oppressed and harassed them. They had felt the burthen of their yoke for a considerable time, and they were now in fear of the event of a decisive battle with the *Ammonites*, who were come out against them.

Ver. 10. Under these their oppressions and difficulties they cry unto God, and confess their sinful revolt from him. The farther process of this their application to God is contained in the verses which I have read. Wherein we have a sharp message sent them from God; the good effect this had upon the people of *Israel*, and at last the compassionate regard which God shewed them thereupon.

First, We find a severe and awful message from God, probably sent by some prophet. *By terrible things in righteousness he answers them.* It is a language of terror, but which carries in it self the most evident marks of righteousness, and which their own consciences could not but acknowledge to be just.

1. He upbraids them with the ingratitude of their defection from him to idolatry, after the many signal deliverances which he had vouchsafed to them. To this end he recounts the principal salvations which they had received, and this in a way of appeal to themselves by question. Ver. 11, 12. *Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians*, when I brought you out of *Egypt* by a succession of wonders, and saved you from *Pharaoh* and his host, when they pursued you, by carrying you safe thro' the Red Sea, and drowning them in it? Did not I deliver you also from the Num. 21. *Amorites*, when they refused you a passage thro' 21, &c. their country, and came out full of rage to destroy Judg. 3. you? And from the children of *Ammon*, when they 13. joined with the *Moabites* to invade you? And from the *Philistines*, when they made the next attempt Ver. 31. upon you in the days of *Shamgar*? The *Zidonians* also, and the *Amalekites*, and the *Maonites* did oppress you, and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out.



November 5, 1720.

5

out of their hand. We find no account elsewhere of their oppression by the *Zidonians*, or by the *Maonites*, a people of *Arabia*. But for the *Amalekites*, *Judg.* 3. we find them acting against *Israel*, both in concert <sup>13.</sup> with the *Moabites*, and afterwards with the *Midianites*. *Ch.* 6. 3. All this enumeration is made to awaken them to genuine remorse for their prodigious ingratitude to a God, who had been so frequently their Saviour in the time of their past distresses. I have thus delivered you in various extremities; *Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other Gods.* *Ver.* 13. All these past mercies have prov'd ineffectual to keep you stedfast with me. Look back upon what I have done for you, and lay to heart the greatness of your sins, as aggravated by every salvation which you have already received.

2. He threatens them for that reason to deliver them no more. *Wherefore I will deliver you no more.* *Ver.* 13. It is plain from the event, that tho' this is delivered in absolute terms, there was a proviso and exception understood, tho' not expressed. And even so severe an answer was given, only as the more effectual means to redouble their fervency in prayer, to give them a lively sense of their sin and deserts, and to engage them to a thorough repentance. We may apprehend the words to carry this sense. 'Possibly you think, because I have delivered you so often upon your cries in the time of your distress, that you may always easily obtain my interposal in your favour, when you need me, upon a formal prayer and confession without any more ado; that you have been so much the darlings of my providence, and received so many of my favours already, that deliverance is entailed upon you, and I will never see you ruined. Instead of such a presumptuous confidence, I would have you to know, that you are the less likely to find me your refuge in future distresses, in proportion to the number and the greatness of the mercies I have already conferred, when notwithstanding them you have forsaken me. Instead of imagining, that because I have delivered you

A SERMON *Preach'd,*

' you so often, therefore I will still deliver you;  
' on the contrary, *therefore* I will deliver you no  
' more. This you may justly expect, this you truly  
' deserve; and this I am resolv'd shall be your case,  
' unless you are awaked to a more serious and  
' hearty repentance and reformation.

Ver. 14.

Deut. 32.  
37, 38.

3. He sends them, by way of severe irony, to those things for which they had forsaken him, to obtain help of them in their distress. *Go and cry unto the Gods you have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.* A keen reflection both upon them, and upon their idols too! Like that of Moses, *Where are their Gods, their rock in whom they trusted; which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.* Why do you apply to me in your distress? Go to those whom you have chosen in my stead. Tho' this may look like triumphing over them in their calamity; yet it really was with a very kind design, the farther to promote their sincere repentance. Their own consciences must tell them, that they deserved such treatment from a forsaken God; and this was the way to shake them off from all their false confidences, by a lively view of their insufficiency to help them; without which they would neither heartily forsake their sins, nor value ivine favour in a becoming manner.

*Secondly,* We have the good effect, that this divine message had upon the people of *Israel*. It did not make them desperate, but produced in them a becoming temper of mind under the sense of their sins, and of divine displeasure; they continue ardent in Prayer; and add to all this the only method, which can give solid hope in extreme dangers after great Provocations, an actual thorow Reformation. God seemed absolutely to deny them any help; it does not appear, that any proviso for repentance was mentioned to them. In such a case many grow desperate, and fly out to any unhallowed methods they can think of for help.

1 Sam. 28. As Saul, because the Philistines made War against him,  
15.

him, and God was departed from him, and answered him no more, therefore applied to the Devil for direction. But this seeming repulse from God had the most kindly effect upon the people now: Tho' they were doubtful of the success, yet they take the true and only way to obtain it: Like the King of Nineveh, when a denunciation, as positive as in the Text, was delivered against that city by the Prophet Jonah; the King proclaimed a fast, *Jonah 3. 4.* ordered all to be covered with sackcloth, to cry mightily unto God, and to turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that was in his hands: Upon this secret hope, worthy of God; *Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not!* Just so, in this earlier age, did the people of Israel behave in the text. Let us observe in particular what is related of them.

1. They renew their confession. *We have sinned. Ver. 15.* 'Thy charge is just, we fall under it. As we have acknowledged it before, we own it still; and own it to be attended with all those aggravations of ingratitude, and folly, in which thou hast set it before us.

2. They submit to the punishment, which God shall think fit to inflict. *Do thou unto us as seemeth good unto thee.* Which is a plain acknowledgment of their ill deserts, and that it would be righteous with God to do as he had said. They accept of *Lev. 26.* the punishment of their iniquity, which is one of *41, 42.* the conditions God fixed with his people, in order to their hope of this merciful regard, after he should inflict his judgments for their sins. And their way of speaking, compared with what follows, seems to carry in it a sense like that of David, when he had the choice of three sore evils given him, pestilence, and famine, and sword; *Let us fall now 2 Sam. 24.* into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; *14.* and let me not fall into the hand of man. So Israel seems to speak here; Lord, chastise us with thine own hand, as thou pleasest; but deliver us not into the hands of these cruel men.

3. They



## A SERMON Preach'd,

3. They humbly and earnestly intreat for h  
mercy. *Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.*  
They own their unworthiness, and the righteous-  
ness of God's threatning, yet they continue instant  
in Prayer, and humbly implore his mercy. As if  
they had said; Lord, try us a little longer, e'er thou  
quit the care of us; chasten us, if thou pleasest,  
but do not destroy us, nor give us up to them  
who would do so. Vouchsafe to deliver us at  
least once more out of this danger, and see whe-  
ther that will not have a better effect than former  
mercies.

Ver. 16.

\* Patr. in  
loc.

4. They immediately proceed to an actual and  
thorough reformation. They actually put away the  
evil of their doings, and they learnt to do well.  
*They put away the strange Gods from among them,  
and served the Lord.* They renounced all idola-  
try, the present ground of controversy between God  
and them; and returned to the true worship of him,  
and of him alone. And it is worthy of observa-  
tion, that \* this is the most remarkable repentance  
and reformation, that we read of hitherto in the  
History of the *Judges*: And it seems to have been  
so serious, that for a long time they did not relapse;  
for we read nothing of their idolatry in the time of  
the three Judges, that followed *Jephthah*.

*Thirdly*, We have here the compassionate regard,  
which God was pleased to shew them hereupon;  
expressed in the most tender manner. *And his soul  
was grieved for the misery of Israel.* Every one  
will understand, that this is to be taken in a figu-  
rative sense, and not in strict propriety. The sa-  
cred Penman; writing for the use of men, to strike  
the more, represents God in the tenderesses of hu-  
man nature. Without doubt, properly speaking,  
God is not capable of anger, grief, or any passionate  
emotions, which are all marks of imperfection. It  
only signifies, that in much mercy he resolved to  
deliver them upon this their repentance; he no  
longer willed to punish them, but dealt with them  
in such manner, as men would do according to  
their ability, when their Souls are touched with a  
lively

November 5, 1720.

9

lively grief and compassion for the afflictions of others. And accordingly we find afterwards, that he raised up, and animated *Jephthah* to be their head and deliverer.

I have thus at large surveyed this whole passage historically, that I might lay the clearer foundation for that discourse, which I intend from it, to suit at once both the occasion of this famous Anniversary, and the particular circumstances of national distress, which give us reason now to keep even *this* feast with bitter herbs.

I shall propose some practical observations from the words, and then apply all to our own case.

I. I would observe, that it is our duty, even in new distresses, seriously to recollect the signal deliverances, which God has already vouchsafed us. This is a way of thinking, which God puts the *Israelites* here upon, to look back upon his former appearances for them. He recounts these with so much particularity, that *Israel* might have their thoughts to dwell upon them. 'Have not I delivered you from such and such an enemy? rescued you out of such a difficulty, as you or your fathers were sore pressed with? Tho' you are now involved anew, let these come fresh into your remembrance, with all the circumstances of your distress, and melancholy apprehensions before your deliverance, and in all the glories of divine providence appearing in your salvations'.

New distresses should not stifle our gratitude for mercies hitherto; nor should the value of them be lessened in our esteem, because the clouds return after the rain. God does his great works to be remembered; and it is itself no small provocation to him, if we soon forget his works, and his wonders that he has shewn us, with which *Israel* is charged. *Ps. 78. 11.* Even when our present circumstances more eminently call for prayer, that should be accompanied with thanksgiving. Tho' the sorest calamities should be either felt or feared, yet the salvations, by which we have been preserved so long, should be reviewed with praise. We should say with *David, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my* *2 Sam. 7. 13.*  
house,

## A SERMON Preach'd,

house, that thou hast brought me hitherto! even on supposition, that our own or our families circumstances should now begin to be distressed. And in publick calamities or dangers, God's favourable providences are not the less to be magnified, whereby the tranquillity of a nation has been maintained so long. Thanksgivings for former salvations, especially those which were great and illustrious, are not superseded by our being involved anew, and having occasion for fresh deliverances.

Past deliverances may be recollected by good men in new difficulties, as encouragements to hope and trust in him for the future. They are sensible evidences of his power and allsufficiency, and of his faithfulness in performing his promises; and therefore great assistances to our faith. We find good men frequently making such use of them.

1 Sam. 17. 37. *The Lord (says David,) that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine.*

2 Corin. 1. 10. *And to the same purpose St. Paul, He delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.*

Particular persons, while they keep God's way; and communities also, when they are in a regular state, may find a comfortable hope of God's not forsaking them in fresh difficulties, upon their past experiences of his care and kindness; and therefore they will be wanting to themselves, if they suffer them to lie in oblivion. But we have the authority of great examples for improving them to some hope, even farther than this. We find good men in some circumstances making use of this plea in their intercessions for a very provoking people; and not without success. *Moses* does so frequently on behalf of the *Israelites* in the wilderness. Upon their making the golden calf, when God was about to destroy them, *Moses* humbly interposes with this argument; *Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand?*

Exod. 32.  
11, 12,  
14.



November 5, 1720.

11

hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth! And we are told, the Lord repented of the evil, which he thought to do unto his people.

And with the same success he urges the same plea on their behalf, upon their murmuring at the report brought by the spies of the land of *Canaan*. Numb 14. 13, &c.

But then it must be considered, that there was something very peculiar in their case, to interest the honour of God's name in their preservation; the positive assurances he had given of bringing them into *Canaan*, the promises made to the holy Patriarchs of making their descendents a great nation, and especially the intended descent of the Messiah from them; which are not circumstances attending any other people. And even notwithstanding these circumstances, tho' they were not utterly extirpated for their provocations, yet they met with very severe strokes of divine vengeance. Tho' we may therefore humbly and submissively intercede for a people upon the foot of God's past appearances; yet without reformation we can entertain but a very feeble hope upon this bottom. Therefore,

Whenever God's hand is stretched out, we should recollect his past deliverances as so many aggravations of our sins, and considerations to humble us before God. This is the purpose, for which God puts the *Israelites* here in remembrance of them. Have I delivered you once and again, and yet you have forsaken me? Nothing aggravates sin more than this. This fixes upon us the charge of *ingratitude*, which is the blackest and most reproachful of all others; that we ill requite the Lord, who has made us and established us. The dissingenuity of sin after great salvations, which should lead us to repentance, ought to be laid to heart, to soften us into a penitent contrition. And indeed, if we venture to provoke God after signal deliverances, it will justly lay us under the imputation of gross folly for our selves, as well as of ingratitude to God: We shall have reason to charge our selves with a-

*Deut. 32. 6.*

*Jer. 2. 13.* abandoning a tried friend for doubtful or insufficient methods of relief; the same thing, which God charged upon *Israel* of old, *forsaking him the fountain of living waters*, whom they had found to be so, *and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water*. The aggravation still rises higher after great and many deliverances, as in our provocations we run counter to the end of such deliverances: It is certain, that they were granted *Luk. 1. 74. 75.* on purpose, *that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies*, or from any other evils, *might serve him without fear*, without a servile dread of any prejudice they can do us, *in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life*. Now how heinous must the crime be, if, instead of answering that end, we should carry it afterwards, as if *Jer. 7. 10.* *we were delivered to do all abominations*? We should endeavour to see the exceeding sinfulness of our sins, by comparing them with that which God has wrought for us.

II. There is nothing, of which we have so much reason to be afraid, when difficulties and dangers return, as lest God should quit the protection of us: Lest he should say, *I will deliver you no more*: For,

*Hos. 9. 12.* This is the most consummate evil in it self. *Wo to them*, says God, *when I depart from them*. It is principally by God's favour, that our mountain stands strong, while it does so; *if he hides his face, how soon shall we be troubled*? If God abandon our protection, we shall easily become a prey to the feeblest enemy, and entirely lie open to any sorts of evils; that is, *if our rock hath sold us, and the Lord shut us up.* *Deut. 32. 30.*

All other means for our safety will be ineffectual, if God forsake us. Whatever methods we have applied to in his stead, whatever idols we have set up in his place, they cannot *deliver us in the time of our tribulation*; they will be found Gods of no might, and physicians of no value; such as God can triumph over, and we must mourn over in the day of our calamity.

Hence

Hence even ill men, when trouble is upon them, or when trouble is near, find themselves obliged to apply to God for help. So the people of *Israel* did here, and on many other occasions. *In their affliction*, says God, *they will seek me early*: I shall hear of them then, whether they ever minded me before, or no. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer, when thy chastening was upon them.* Even many, who live without God in the world in their ordinary course, yet think it worth their while in threatening emergencies to try what he will do for them. But,

Hos. 5. 15.

Isa. 26. 16.

There is no small ground to fear, lest God should refuse to answer our prayers, if we seek him only in our distress, while we have been insensible of the attractive force of signal deliverances. This is plainly intimated by God in the text. And humble and holy minds will have an apprehension of the contrary, like *Ezra*. *After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these Abominations; wouldest thou not be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* It is certain, that a revolt, especially so aggravated, is a forfeiture by God's constitution. *If ye forsake me, I will forsake you.* And this forfeiture God has actually taken of some, whom he had frequently delivered; as this people of the *Jews* in particular: And why should he not do the same for others, as well as for them?

Ezr. 9. 13,

14.

2 Chron.

15. 2.

III. The way, which is most likely to secure divine favour, even when we have forsaken him after many deliverances, is to apply to him as penitent supplicants, and actually to break off our sins by a sincere and entire reformation.

Our fears of his departure in just judgment from us, should by no means keep us at a distance from him; but on the contrary excite us to make an  
expe-



experiment of that way, wherein, if in any, there may be hope of averting so dreadful an evil. And the example of the text leads us to the only way that looks promising; if this will not succeed, nothing will.

1. Glory must be given to God by confession. If we would hope, that God will yet shew mercy, there must be a sense of our sins, and not only of our sufferings: Of our sins in their aggravations, that our behaviour has been peculiarly unsuitable and unworthy of the course of benefits which God has conferred upon us; that we have requited him evil for good; that we *found no iniquity in him*, to countenance our departure from him. If God shall excuse us from feeling the deserts of our sins, it must be expected, that we should be sensible of their ill desert, and therefore fall down in a submission to his holy pleasure. If he shall yet become a Saviour to us, we must be softned to acknowledge the righteousness of his providence, either in the present distresses which he has brought upon us, or if he should involve us in others impending over us. If we *fret against the Lord*, or murmur at his rod, we cannot but have a very uncomfortable prospect. Nothing can give so probable a hope of exemption or deliverance, as if we are brought humbly and heartily to own, that, according to his threatening in the Text, it would be just in him to *deliver us no more*, and to send us in the time of our tribulation to the vanities which we have chosen. And after publick provocations, he should be glorified by publick acknowledgments of our sins, of our forfeiture of his mercies, and of our desert of his judgments.

2. Humble and fervent prayer should accompany our confessions. Past deliverances should excite us still to ask. We should fill our mouths with all the arguments, with which he has furnished us in his word: And persevere in this exercise, as long  
*Rom. 12.* there is hope or a reprieve. This is to *continue in-*  
*stant in prayer; always to pray, and not to faint.*  
*Luk. 18. 1.* This is a reasonable homage expected from us, as  
 an

November 5, 1720.

15

an acknowledgment of our intire dependance upon God: And it is the best way to form our mind to a temper fit for a receiving and using aright, a fresh deliverance, if God should be pleased to grant it.

3. A real and thorough reformation is farther necessary. And this indeed is the principal thing. Confession and prayer are chiefly intended to lead us to this, and will be of little service to us without it. We find God taking little notice of the confessions or prayers of the people of *Israel*, till they came to this, of *putting away the strange gods from among them, and serving the Lord*: Then his soul was grieved for their afflictions. Many are willing in the time of their distress to say, we have sinned, and to cry for mercy; but they care not to go farther. They can be content to fast, or pray, or engage in any of the external duties of religion, when trouble awakens them; but they would substitute this in the room of real reformation, and compound by any thing external for omitting to do this in earnest. But nothing will do without this; and that in both the branches of it, forsaking sin, and returning unto God; *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*. And this amendment must not be merely transient, during a present fright; not *like the morning cloud, or the early dew that passes away*; but engaged in with a design of perseverance, and a resolution against new relapses; as it was observed, that *Israel* seemed to have been peculiarly hearty and in earnest in the reformation here spoken of.

IV. Hereupon, whatever a people's past difficulties and deserts may have been, there will be room to hope, for God's compassionate regard still, and that he will deliver yet again. His gracious and merciful nature is no small encouragement to a reforming people: That affliction is *his strange work*; *Isa. 28. 21.* he is so far from delighting in the misery and ruin of his creatures, that he *is good and does good*, and does not willingly afflict the children of men, but when his honour requires it. The end of his corrections is to bring men to reformation. When he *testifies* *Nehem. 9. 29.* *against them*, it is, *that he may bring them again un-*

to

to his law. If that end is attained, he has accomplished his work upon them, and it may be hoped, that he will remove his hand. He has even settled it as his constitution to do so. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, then I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* And the course of his providence in all ages has been agreeable. No instance can be given of a people destroyed, when they were brought to repentance, and prayer, and amendment.

This is certain upon a general and prevailing return to God. But there is some room for hope, that a community may be spared, when there are some righteous persons in it, that are intercessors for it; so much hope, as should engage the few that are in such places to *stand in the breach*, when God's judgments are abroad. God descended very low in the terms of mercy to Sodom, upon Abraham's intreaty; he would not destroy it, if ten righteous persons could be found there. And yet lower still in the case of Jerusalem; *See now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, and that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.*

These are no small encouragements to good men to persevere in prayer for their country. They have still more ground to expect God's favour to themselves. They may receive a favourable distinction in a common calamity: As those in Jerusalem, who *sighed for all the abominations done in the midst thereof*, had a mark on their foreheads to exempt them from the common desolation. *It may be they may be hid in the Lord's anger.* But if the judgment should be inevitable, and good men be involved in it; yet it shall be well at last with them that prepare to meet their God.

Let me now apply what has been said upon this subject to our selves.



1. Let us consider our own case, which runs parallel with that of *Israel* in the text, both as to variety of eminent deliverances already vouchsafed, and our being involved again in new difficulties.

We have certainly been as often and as remarkably saved, as any nation under heaven, since the expiration of the covenant of peculiarity with the *Jewish* nation: And therefore God may justly put us in mind, as he does them here, how often he has delivered us. This day has been made signal in our Calendar by two glorious salvations. Since we came out of *Egypt* by the reformation, our principal dangers and deliverances too have been from *Popery*. In every reign since, there have been some attempts and contrivances from that quarter against us. When God has seen fit to bring a scourge upon us for our sins, those of that communion or their abettors have commonly been the rods in his hand. Or when our troubles have visibly been owing to the divisions of Protestants, they have commonly blown the coals, or made their improvement of them afterwards.

I shall look no farther back, than to the horrid attempt, which first made this day remarkable among us. It was a contrivance, you know, to have destroyed no less than the Sovereign and his whole senate at one sudden blow; that the heads of the nation being taken off, the rest of the people might become an easy prey in the general confusion. And with a design equally black, they had made preparation for setting Protestants at the farthest variance; and exposing those to the rage of their brethren, who have ever expressed the most fixed abhorrence of *Popery*: Had the design taken effect, the odium of this villainous fact was to have been laid upon the *Puritans*.<sup>a</sup> A circumstance, <sup>a</sup> This is affirmed in  
which should particularly heighten our sense of the deli-general by  
most of  
our Historians. See *Full. Ch. Hist. B.* 12. p. 34. *Wilson's James*, in  
*Bp. Kenner's Collection*, vol. 2. p. 676. *Heyl. Hist. of the Presbyt.* p.  
373. But *Foulis*, who in other things is as ready to fall foul up-  
on

to his law. If that end is attained, he has accomplished his work upon them, and it may be hoped, that he will remove his hand. He has even settled it as his constitution to do so. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, then I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* And the course of his providence in all ages has been agreeable. No instance can be given of a people destroyed, when they were brought to repentance, and prayer, and amendment.

This is certain upon a general and prevailing return to God. But there is some room for hope, that a community may be spared, when there are some righteous persons in it, that are intercessors for it; so much hope, as should engage the few that are in such places to *stand in the breach*, when God's judgments are abroad. God descended very low in the terms of mercy to *Sodom*, upon *Abraham's* intreaty; he would not destroy it, if ten righteous persons could be found there. And yet lower still in the case of *Jerusalem*; *See now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, and that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.*

These are no small encouragements to good men to persevere in prayer for their country. They have still more ground to expect God's favour to themselves. They may receive a favourable distinction in a common calamity: As those in *Jerusalem*, who *sighed for all the abominations done in the midst thereof*, had a mark on their foreheads to exempt them from the common desolation. *It may be they may be hid in the Lord's anger.* But if the judgment should be inevitable, and good men be involved in it; yet it shall be well at last with them that prepare to meet their God.

Let me now apply what has been said upon this subject to our selves.

1. Let us consider our own case, which runs parallel with that of *Israel* in the text, both as to variety of eminent deliverances already vouchsafed, and our being involved again in new difficulties.

We have certainly been as often and as remarkably saved, as any nation under heaven, since the expiration of the covenant of peculiarity with the *Jewish* nation: And therefore God may justly put us in mind, as he does them here, how often he has delivered us. This day has been made signal in our Calendar by two glorious salvations. Since we came out of *Egypt* by the reformation, our principal dangers and deliverances too have been from *Popery*. In every reign since, there have been some attempts and contrivances from that quarter against us. When God has seen fit to bring a scourge upon us for our sins, those of that communion or their abettors have commonly been the rods in his hand. Or when our troubles have visibly been owing to the divisions of Protestants, they have commonly blown the coals, or made their improvement of them afterwards.

I shall look no farther back, than to the horrid attempt, which first made this day remarkable among us. It was a contrivance, you know, to have destroyed no less than the Sovereign and his whole senate at one sudden blow; that the heads of the nation being taken off, the rest of the people might become an easy prey in the general confusion. And with a design equally black, they had made preparation for setting Protestants at the farthest variance; and exposing those to the rage of their brethren, who have ever expressed the most fixed abhorrence of *Popery*: Had the design taken effect, the odium of this villainous fact was to have been laid upon the *Puritans*. <sup>a</sup> A circumstance, <sup>a</sup> This is affirmed in deli-general by most of

our Historians. See *Full. Ch. Hist.* B. 12. p. 34. *Wilson's James*, in *Bp. Kenner's Collection*, vol. 2. p. 676. *Heyl. Hist. of the Presbyt.* p. 373. But *Fonlis*, who in other things is as ready to fall foul up-



deliverance, who glory in them as our Fathers. This work of darkness, by the good Providence of God, was laid open in time; and that was turned to their perpetual Infamy, by which they hoped to secure us for their property.

When they failed in destroying us at once, both root and branch, their counsels were turned into another channel; and in the remainder of that and the two succeeding reigns they acted a more refined part. They insinuated themselves by various

on the *Puritans* as any man, gives the most particular and authentick account of this matter in his *History of Romish Treasons*, p. 690. ' They determined to throw the crime upon the *Puritans*, by declaring them the Traytors, who blew up the Parliament. To carry on which false report, they had framed a Proclamation, which they had got printed, and ready for publishing upon the sign given, which they suppressed and burnt upon the discovery; tho' some of them by chance came to view, and were seen and read by Dr. Parker Dean of Lincoln, Sir W. Ellis Recorder of the said city, and other persons. And the better also to get the same credit with the people, Keys, brother in law to Mr. Pickering, [and one of the conspirators,] had a few days before either borrowed or bought the swift horse (well known in London and thereabouts) of Mr. Pickering of Tichmarch-grove in Northamptonshire, a noted Puritan, whom they also designed to kill; upon which Faux, having fired the match and touchwood leading to the train, was to escape, as they bore him in hand; but their design was to kill him at taking horse, for Pickering's man; which the people would easily believe, seeing the horse so well known to them; and the multitude once persuaded of this, would be more facill to join with them, under notion of doing justice upon such supposed Traytors and Wretches'. Thus far Foulis, Mr. Ralph Venning in a Sermon before the Lord Mayor of London, Nov. 5. 1656. called, *Mercies Memorial*, relates the same passage of Pickering. Only adds, that the horse was to lie ready in St. George's fields in Southwark: That Faux's body was to be so mangled, as not to be known: And that when this contrivance was afterwards discovered by some of the conspirators in prison, and Faux in the Tower was made acquainted with it, he quitted his obstinate refusal to make a discovery, and freely confessed all he knew. Mr. Venning adds, that the truth of this was attested by Mr. Perkins a noted citizen of London to Dr. Gouge; and Mr. Clement Cotton, Author of the Concordances, had it from Mr. Pickering himself, and from some of his relations.

November 5, 1720.

19

ous arts into the connivance and countenance of our Princes, and spirited up many factions and divisions among our selves, both upon civil and religious accounts.

At length upon the accession of a profest and zealous Papist to the throne, they thought all must go sure on their side; and instigated the Prince then reigning to take the most eager and forward steps, upon the ruins of our Laws and Liberties, to introduce the quick settlement of their Religion. I shall leave the recollection of the invasions then made upon our rights and liberties, to the memories of those who then knew the world, or to the histories of that period. I shall only say, that tho' many now seem to have forgotten, that any such illegal or dangerous steps were taken, yet it was then the universal sense of Protestants through the nation. One and all then cryed out for a deliverer. The divisions among us were hushed asleep; the high flights of absolute non-resistance, which had been the burthen of the song in the pulpit, were silenced on a sudden: Every Protestant apprehended the necessity of making a vigorous stand against the fatal measures of a Popish Court. God inclined a neighbouring Prince, upon earnest applications of all ranks from hence, generously to venture his all to serve us: And the States, over whom he presided, as generously embarked their all upon the same bottom. Providence smiled on the attempt for Religion and Liberty, and marked this day with a new glory by the GREAT WILLIAM's setting foot then upon our shore: A name celebrated then by every tongue, as raised up by God to be the Saviour of *England* and of *Europe*; and which will ever be remembered with joy by all true lovers of both. How suddenly, upon his appearance among us, did our dangers vanish! what a Spirit possessed the people in general! what a terror seized our enemies! The nation was, as it were, born in a day; Popery stole away in silence; the throne was happily filled by the consent of a free people; the Laws returned to their regular course without

any long intermission; the Liberties of *Europe* were contended for and gained; and before that glorious reign expired, the blessed legacy of a Protestant succession was settled by the firmest barriers of Law.

I need not call to your minds, what apprehensions we were full of a few years ago, lest we should be disappointed of that entail of the blessing of the Revolution; nor with what joy and wonder we were relieved from our fears by the peaceable and unexpected accession of his present Majesty, whom God long preserve. We were then *like those that dream*: Our fears just before had been so strong, and our joys upon the change so raised, that we could scarce believe at first the salvation wrought for us. I can have no occasion to point in particular at the circumstances of providential favour, which have confirmed and secured his Majesty's government since, because they are all fresh in your remembrance.

These deliverances justly claim our solemn and thankful memorials. If present difficulties should take off our relish for them, or induce us to undervalue mercies, which secure to us our most desirable interests; that would it self be one of the worst omens we have for our future welfare.

And yet present providences call us to *sing of mercy and of judgment*; tho' certainly of *mercy rejoicing over judgment*. Every one is acquainted with the present difficulties and dangers, which attend us. Blessed be God, not as the case of the *Israelites* here was, from new enemies abroad; God has made our old enemies to be at peace with us, and reduced them to circumstances, wherein they are disabled from taking advantage of our calamities, if they had it in their inclination. We have still a Protestant, and a free government at home; God has crowned the year with his goodness, in the necessary products of the earth. But none can be insensible, that there is a sudden ruin of general distress, affecting innumerable persons and families, beyond any instance within the reach of  
of



November 5, 1720.

21

of memory, and possibly within the reach of history: And at the same time a yet more melancholy prospect, from a dreadful contagion, sweeping away numbers in the neighbouring kingdom, and hovering over our heads.

2. Let us therefore consider, and apply our selves to our present duty.

The subject we are upon, leads us to observe, that the great and many deliverances we have received, should neither be forgotten, nor coldly remembered in our present circumstances. We should neither be sick of our deliverances, nor think the worse of them because of present distresses. But we should *rejoice with trembling*: And with a mixture of so much the greater concern, as the benefits we have received have been extraordinary for their nature and number; and as the frowns of providence at this time are very striking, and very extensive. Ps. 2. 11.

Surely the God, who has so often delivered us, is angry with us. And *is there not a cause*? Has the liberty of our religion been so often preserved by a succession of wonders, that it might be devoured at once by a prodigious spirit of worldliness? Have we been saved from popish frauds, that we might be capacitated to defraud and go beyond one another in the most extravagant manner? Are we secur'd from popery, that we might have opportunity to bid adieu to all religion? Has God been the guardian of the religion we justly call *Reformed* among us, that our vices and the dissolution of our manners should remain unreformed?

The past salvations we are here commemorating have been from the malicious contrivances and unjust attempts of our enemies; but the present distresses of the nation are directly self-made. Never was that more literally true, than in the present case, that *our own wickedness corrects us, and our backslidings reprove us*. Men have evidently involved themselves in the present calamity, by their own unparallel'd covetousness, abandoning the business of their proper stations, and a rash adventuring beyond Jer. 2. 19.

yond their bottom. They have no reason at all to complain of God, nor indeed of any so much as of themselves. Let us not stand it out in our provocations, but with contrite spirits acknowledge wherein we have exceeded; not only lament our distresses, but especially the sins by which we have drawn them upon our selves. Let us entertain a godly sorrow for that most inordinate love of riches, which had in the most uncommon degree overspread all sorts, all ages, all professions, and all sexes among us, and led on to all extravagant adventures; and which indeed made it necessary to secure any thing of religion or honesty among us, that people should be feelingly taught the vanity of their raised expectations. Let us humbly confess, that by this and our other sins we have righteously deserved what is already come upon us; and that it would be very just in God to proceed to greater extremities, and to lay us under his more immediate hand.

Would it not be a righteous thing with God to send us a devouring plague from our neighbours, when they have already infected us with that thirst of exorbitant gain, of which they set us the example? Could it be esteemed an undue severity, if that cup of trembling should come round to us, when our land is full of as notorious vices, and as profligate sinners as theirs, and this under far greater light and advantages! Surely no; but except we repent, we must likewise perish.

Let us therefore bow down before the Lord our Maker in penitent humiliations, and return to him by a present and thorough reformation; then we may hopefully apply to his mercy by earnest prayer, that he will yet save his people, and bless this his inheritance.

I rejoice to see the numbers and the apparent seriousness of those, who for some weeks past have joined in the publick confessions and supplications, which have been offered up in several assemblies of the protestant Dissenters of this City. It is a hopeful symptom; it is our present, and our proper duty.

I wish

November 5, 1720.

23

I wish all the people of the Nation, of every denomination, and of every rank, were engaged in some like publick acknowledgment of God in our present circumstances. But let us remember, that reformation will be of the greatest service; for *if we regard iniquity in our hearts, and persist in the practice of it, God will not hear our prayers.*

Let each of us then set our selves upon personal amendment, and promote it all we can in our own families, over which we may hope, next to our selves, to have the most influence. Let us do what we can to reform, or at least to restrain and check the vices of the age: And earnestly pray to God to dispose those of the highest rank to be examples in reformation, and all in authority to countenance and promote it, *so as to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well.*

God may spare a people for the sake of some, who in earnest return to him, and humbly intercede for others. But I am sure from the declarations of Scripture, and the constant course of Providence, that a nation generally engaging in reformation shall not be utterly forsaken. May God pour out his spirit abundantly thus to heal our land: Then he will effectually enable our most gracious Sovereign to execute all his paternal inclinations for the welfare of his people; he will *counsel our counselors, and teach our senators wisdom* in this most critical juncture; and make them *healers of our breaches, and restorers of paths to dwell in.* Then he will either avert the fearful contagion, or make it a refining and not a consuming fire. He will himself be a wall of fire round about us to secure all our valuable interests: And these past deliverances will still have a fresh accent put upon them by the addition of continual favours from a gracious God.

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6 JU 65



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